

BOOK REVIEW

Atlas of the Land and Freshwater Molluscs of Britain and Ireland
by Michael Kerney

published by Harley Books in association with the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland. 1999; 264pp. Hardback; price 25 Pounds Sterling.

This is a book for the enthusiast; anyone who is seriously into non-marine molluscs would value this work, It would also make an ideal format to which those documenting a regional non-marine mollusc fauna in Australia could aspire.

The atlas is a compilation of interesting facts about each species with a line drawing of the shell or animal, habitat and distributional information and a dot-map showing the known records of each species throughout Great Britain and Ireland based on the 10 km square survey grid. This atlas information was completed in 1998 and was an update of the earlier atlas published by the Conchological Society in 1976. Three symbols are used on the dot-maps, records made in or after 1965; records made prior to 1965 only and fossil occurrences (Lateglacial and Postglacial) lying outside modern ranges. These clearly illustrate where a species is in decline with local population extinctions. Page reference is also made to the full descriptions and identification notes for each species given in the Field Guide to the Land Snails of Great Britain and north-west Europe published by Kerney & Cameron in 1979, and the census published by Ellis in 1951 or the bivalves by Ellis in 1978.

The running head of these map pages gives the family and genus of the species depicted on each page. The whole page design and choice of font, the choice of paper and the quality of the printing, all give the feeling of a "class" production. In all, 211 species are treated including 20 species of prosobranchs in 9 families, 30 species of bivalves in 4 families and 161 species of pulmonates in 29 families. This is really the definitive report on the status of the non-marine molluscan fauna of the British Isles and as such is the model for the world on how to carry out and compile a detailed statement on the current conservation position of this important group of invertebrate animals. But it is also very much a working text and research tool. The book starts with an early history of recording of distributional data of non-marine molluscs in Britain and the history of the Conchological Society Census. This again is a lesson to the many other countries around the world that have local societies or shell clubs about how to harness that pool of enthusiasts to further the knowledge of conservation science in that country or region. The mapping scheme is described and some of the philosophy behind the choice of procedures is given; with the reader well aware that the author of this final work was also involved in those early discussions and decisions nearly 40 years or more ago.

Two short chapters on the Factors Influencing Distribution and a History of the British Fauna set out very clearly how the results of all the survey work which enabled the species maps to be constructed, are also used to make authoritative statements about the fauna in general. Again people may think

that these are only of interest to those working on the minutiae or the British fauna and are of little interest to workers in other parts of the world. But a number of species from Britain and Western Europe have become world travellers and worldwide pest species, so any insights into the factors which might limit their populations in their native settings are of immense value to workers around the world trying to understand their population dynamics as introduced aliens.

The work is furnished with a comprehensive bibliography and a well ordered index. All in all, a very pleasing and useful work, well designed and presented with one of D.G. Rands high quality colour photographs as a cover illustration. This book is the fitting product of over 40 years diligent research, is an example to the rest of the world and is a must for all workers of non-marine mollusc population research and snail enthusiasts.

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